

## Press Room



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### **State to Crackdown on Impaired Driving During Holidays** *December is Drunk & Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month*

**SACRAMENTO** – The Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) and California Highway Patrol (CHP) aren't wasting any time getting ready for the holidays- they're warning motorists early on to make plans for those upcoming holiday celebrations, plans that they hope will include the use of designated drivers and seat belts.

"Removing impaired drivers from our state's highways has always been important in California, particularly during the holidays," said CHP Commissioner D.O. "Spike" Helmick. "If you think you can get away with drinking and driving, consider yourself forewarned. The Highway Patrol, along with many other law enforcement agencies, will be very busy looking for you."

December is California's annual Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month, with several law enforcement agencies statewide planning sobriety checkpoints and other efforts to deter impaired driving.

"The Office of Traffic Safety has made a concentrated effort to fund DUI enforcement programs where the need is greatest," said Teresa Becher, OTS Interim Director. "During 2002, more than \$16 million has specifically been set aside to support impaired driving efforts, many of which fall during the December holidays. We want to make sure the California Highway Patrol and other law enforcement agencies have the support they need to effectively get impaired drivers off the roads."

The consequences of impaired driving last a lot longer than one more drink, often costing thousands of dollars in vehicle towing and storage, increases in insurance, DUI classes, community service, DMV fees and other fines.

"A cab ride home is one of the best investments you can possibly make for yourself and your

family," said Helmick. "It may just be the best \$20 you ever spend."

During this year's 3D Month campaign, the OTS and CHP, along with the California Restaurant Association, encourage Californians to not only celebrate responsibly by using designated drivers, but by also making sure they wear seat belts every time they get in the car.

Alcohol-related fatalities have risen for three consecutive years after more than a decade of decline. In 2001, 1,308 people were killed and 31,806 were injured in alcohol-related crashes - up from 1,233 deaths and 30,971 injuries the year before. Additionally, more than 176,000 arrests were made last year for impaired driving.

The OTS and CHP provide the following tips to help prevent impaired driving in your community:

- Always have a designated driver on hand whenever alcohol is served.
- Never serve alcohol to minors.
- Talk to young people about the dangers of impaired driving.
- Support your local law enforcement's efforts to fight impaired driving.
- Provide non-alcoholic beverages at holiday celebrations.

For more information regarding California's 3D Month campaign, please visit the OTS Web site at [www.ots.ca.gov](http://www.ots.ca.gov).

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\*Statistics based on California Highway Patrol 2001 provisional data and Department of Motor Vehicles 2002 DUI MIS Report.